

457 p.c
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The Gospel Treasure in Vessels of Clay;

A

S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

The Hon. and Rev. W. B. CADOGAN, A. M.

RECTOR OF ST. LUKE'S, CHELSEA; AND VICAR OF ST. GILES'S,
READING.

PREACHED IN

The Parish Church of St. Andrew Wardrobe,
and St. Ann, Blackfriars, London,

On Sunday, January 22, 1797,

By WILLIAM GOODE, A. M. R

RECTOR OF THE SAID CHURCH, AND LECTURER OF ST.
JOHN'S, WAPPING.

*Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find
so doing.*

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A

SERMON, &c.

2 COR. iv. 7.

BUT WE HAVE THIS TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS,
THAT THE EXCELLENCY OF THE POWER MAY BE OF
GOD, AND NOT OF US,

SOME of you, my brethren, are too well acquainted with the circumstances which have led me this day to the consideration of these words. My mind has been seriously impressed with that most affecting Providence which has taken place in the course of the last week, and given a painful demonstration of their truth. And I am persuaded that all of you will enter into my feelings, and join your sentiments of sorrow with mine, when I inform you, that the Church of God has lost an able, a faithful, minister of the word of life; that the great Head of his church, the wise disposer of all events, has taken to himself one whom we have often heard with pleasure and with profit, by whose occasional labours we hoped yet more to be profited, who has been greatly useful in his station, and promised still greater use-

fulness for a length of time to come. I mean the Rev. Mr. Cadogan. With regard to himself we sorrow not, his work was finished, and his reward is with the Lord. But, in whatever view we consider this event to the church, it bears a solemn aspect; we can only pronounce it right, as it is the act of him, "who doeth that which seemeth good in his sight," and what seemeth good to him we know *must* certainly be so. Here we submit and say, "the will of the Lord be done."

As the faithful minister we lament was well known and beloved amongst us, when these words engaged my attention, I did not attempt to resist the impression which they made, convinced that the design of them would be more effectually answered while so unexpected a providence solemnizes the mind. With this view let us consider the *gospel as a treasure—its ministers as earthen vessels—the excellency of its power of God.* And oh, may the Spirit of grace and power pour upon us his peculiar unction, that we may be the witnesses of its excellency to his own glory.

FIRST, We are to consider the gospel as a treasure.—What the apostle alludes to will be clearly evinced by a short view of the preceding verses. Here the apostle is speaking of "the word of God"—"the manifestation of the truth"—"that Gospel which is hid to them that are lost, but is in truth the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, whom he preached"—Yea, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—This is the treasure. And though conveyed to us in such mean, unworthy, and brittle, vessels, the treasure is yet the same, and hereby the glory is reserved for him to whom alone it is due.

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The gospel is then a glorious treasure, and we see what it is that constitutes it such, it is CHRIST in the Gospel, exhibited there in the dignity of his person, the all-sufficiency of his work, and the inestimable blessings of his salvation.—He is the very essence of the Gospel, the very essence of all treasures. Without an interest in him, were we possessed of all the riches of the universe, we should be miserably poor. With him, though poor in this world, we are rich indeed. “He is that treasure hid in a field, which when a man hath found, (and knows its true value) he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.” Mat. xiii. 44.—This is the treasure put into the ministers of Christ (well is it if it be put into their hearts), and which they are to exhibit, to administer, to communicate, by displaying the glories of this divine Saviour—by discovering the all-sufficiency of his salvation—the freeness of his grace—and inviting poor miserable sinners of the sons of men, to come freely and partake of the whole.

“To whom God would make known (says this apostle) what is the *riches of the glory* of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ* in you the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, &c.” Col. i. 27, 28. And why? because “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Col. ii. 3. Yea “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (really and substantially).” Col. ii. 9, 10. Since then there is such fullness of all blessings, in him, what ideas shall we select, what views shall we present to you, from the infinite glories of this wonderful person? Here is a rich Saviour indeed, rich in himself with all the glories of the Godhead, and rich in blessings to communicate to all his people.—In these views, “he is precious to you which believe.” And, if he be so now when we see his glories but

but as through a glass darkly, what shall he appear when we see him as he is!—What prospects now engage the mind of our late dear departed father in Christ, and of our friend, who so lately has joined him among the society of the redeemed!

Their views were very similar on earth, and no doubt now, united in the same vision of his glories, they unite in the same song of praise, “to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be the glory and dominion—to God and the Lamb be equal praise.”

At present we can only behold his glories as in his word; and, blessed be God, “unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given to preach among miserable sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ.”—Here then let us turn our attention, and contemplate these unsearchable riches

Exhibited I. In the rich and precious *truths* of that sacred repository—The great truths of the gospel, as connected with Christ, are a treasure of inestimable value, had we but eyes to see their glory, and hearts set right, and fitted for the enjoyment.

They are exceedingly delightful to the contrite sinner; full of comfort and consolation to the believing mind. The gospel truly answers its name, good news—glad tidings—for it brings under our observation, “What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and blessings that it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive.”—It is a truth of this glorious gospel of Christ, that there is a covenant of grace and salvation entered into by the eternal Three, on behalf of guilty sinners.—It is a truth of this glorious gospel, that Jesus Christ is the mediator and surety of this new and better covenant; that he hath fulfilled all its terms, purchased all its blessings, and secured their enjoyment for all his people; that

that he hath wrought out and brought to us an everlasting righteousness, fully answerable to every demand of the holy and unchanging law of God; that he hath offered up an atoning sacrifice, infinite in its value, eternal in its efficacy, and so adequate in every respect to the great design, that infinite justice cannot but rest satisfied in the work, and glory in the honour which it has received thereby.—Hear it, thou afflicted conscience, and be at rest—For it is now also a certain truth of the glorious Gospel of Christ, that God is a God of peace in him, well pleased for his righteousness sake, reconciled to sinners, and reconciling the world unto himself; that “there is pardon for infinite offence, by means that speak its value infinite,” this atoning sacrifice of Jesus, through which a poor perishing prodigal may return to his heavenly Father’s house, and be welcomed to all its provision, its protection, and its treasures.—It is a glorious truth of this precious gospel, that Jesus our redeemer is “gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us:” yea that he in our nature is seated upon the throne of glory, “head over all things to his church”—It is a truth, that in him is all-sufficiency, infinite sufficiency, to carry on his purposes of grace, in the world, in the church, and in the hearts of all his people, in their present sanctification, and in their faithful preservation through all their trials, difficulties, and temptations, to the world above.—It is a truth of this glorious gospel of Christ, that life and immortality are brought to light thereby; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.—It is a truth, that casts a bright beam of glory over the whole, that all who die, or rather sleep, in Jesus shall meet around his throne, shall participate of his blessedness, and be enriched with the riches of his

glory throughout eternity—What truths are these!—But these things will appear still more surprising when we consider them,

II. As connected with “the exceeding great and precious *promises*” of this gospel of Christ.—“All the promises of God, says the apostle, in him are YEA and in him AMEN, unto the glory of God, by us,” 2 Cor. i. 20. This brings the invaluable treasures of those divine truths near to our hearts, and directs us in the application, and into the satisfying enjoyment of their abundant blessings.

This it is that constitutes the great glory of the gospel, that it is intended for perishing sinners; that such are invited to, and such are made really partakers of, its grace.—As what Jesus did he did for his people, so what he is he is for them, for their benefit and salvation. And who are they? Every returning penitent is, no doubt, among their number, yea all who are willing to come to him, to receive him as their Redeemer and their Lord, to trust themselves in his hands, and to receive from him freely all the blessings of salvation. What he intends to do for such he has graciously informed them, and irrevocably insured to them, in the promises of his word. And, while faith is persuaded of and embraces these, it is impossible that a penitent sinner should be dejected, or the humblest believer distressed. Let us cast our eyes for a few moments on that sacred repository of divine engagements, and we shall be compelled to confess, there is not a want we can feel, nor a situation into which we may be cast, but a rich provision is here made for our supply and consolation, purchased with the blood, laid up in the fullness, of the Lord our Redeemer, and presented for our acceptance in his word. And for whom?—for sinners of the sons of men, the hungry and the thirsty,

thirsty, the weary and the heavy laden with the guilt and consequences of their sin.

Let us begin, where a convinced and penitent sinner will always begin his confessions and his prayers, with his need of *pardoning mercy*. We address such in the language of the Old Testament, with words of encouragement like these. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Is. i. 18. In the language of the New Testament we bring the same consolatory message, and inform him, that "we who were once afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," for he is our peace, and that—because "in him we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. ii. 13, and i. 7. How precious to the wounded spirit and the contrite heart such discoveries as these! Feeling himself to stand guilty before God, condemned by a holy law, set home upon his conscience by the Spirit of the Lord, he hears with wonder and gratitude a message so reviving, abounding with such undeserved grace; he hopes that *his* iniquities shall be blotted out as a cloud, and *his* transgressions as a thick cloud, when assured that there is mercy with God through Jesus Christ, and in him plenteous redemption.

The next want that a guilty sinner feels is that of acceptance and *justification* in the presence of a holy God. He knows that without a perfect righteousness no creature can stand accepted before his great Creator. The law makes its demand, a demand which must be answered, and, while he feels himself a transgressor, he acknowledges the sentence just. In himself therefore he is destitute of that righteousness

ness which alone can commend him in the sight of God, without the ability to atone for past transgressions, or to perform the necessary obedience for the time to come. That Gospel which promises salvation to such sinners, must discover "the gift of righteousness," and this it does.

The prophet Isaiah has represented this under a most beautiful allusion to the showers of rain descending from heaven to revive the earth, and causing it to produce its fruit abundantly. "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I Jehovah have created it." Is. xlv. 8. "Hearken unto me (says the Lord by the same prophet), ye stout hearted that are far from righteousness"—"hearken unto me ye that follow after righteousness—for my righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth." Is. li. 1, 4. And the apostle, from the instance of Abraham, informs us how this righteousness is to be received and enjoyed. "For, as faith was imputed unto him for righteousness, so shall it be imputed unto us, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. iv. 24, 25.

Thus, standing in his righteousness, made over by a divine gift, and received by faith, "we are justified from all things."—Yea, "we are complete in him." Col. ii. 10. This is a gift that wonderfully enriches a poor sinner. The happy subject of it may dismiss his fears, raise himself from his miserable poverty, and join the triumphant language of the prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,

that I might stand in his sight as the bridegroom decked with his ornaments, and as a bride adorned with her jewels."—Is. lxi. 10. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift.

Does the contrite sinner yet feel fresh wants arising, and that without a *renewed nature* he can have no enjoyment of a holy God? "He is our sanctification," and the regenerating influence of his enlightening and enlivening Spirit can, and does, create the hearts of his people anew in Christ Jesus, and begin to restore in them that image of righteousness and true holiness from which we are fallen. This is the great gospel promise. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you," (the acknowledged emblem of the Spirit in his sanctifying grace) and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Ez. xxxvi. 25—27. Compare Heb. viii. 10. And this is realized in the experience of all who truly belong to him.

But now, set out in the Christian race, with his face towards Zion, he needs *direction* through the perplexities of the wilderness, and that direction is at hand: for "thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldest go." Is. xlviii. 17.

Yea, the rich *provisions* of his providence and grace shall attend the needy traveller, like the heavenly manna, and refreshing stream, through the wilderness of old; and equal miracles be wrought, though

though not perhaps always so evident, to supply the necessities of his chosen flock. "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in the high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies, I will make the *wilderness* a pool of water, and the *dry land* springs of water." Is. xli. 17, 18, &c. Fear not then, thou afflicted and distressed believer; dark and gloomy as thy circumstances may be, encourage thyself in the Lord thy God, the God of Israel; who engages to repeat even Israel's miracles for thy support and consolation.

But how shalt thou be kept secure through all thy trials and enemies to the end? Sensible of thine own infirmities and corruptions, the prospect before thee often makes thee to tremble; but, kept by the power of God, thou shalt be *preserved* unto salvation. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 40. Yea, the Lord will give *grace*, and the Lord will give *glory*, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk in sincerity before him. Blessed then is he that trusteth in the Lord. Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

What news is here for dying sinners, ministers as well as people; what an inexhaustible repository of spiritual treasures is the Gospel of Christ, exhibited to Faith, and brought experimentally into the heart of every true believer! Let us then view this Gospel

III. In the riches which it actually communicates to all who receive its grace.—That must be a treasure indeed that ennobles as well as enriches those who possess it. And so does the gospel—It raises wretched sinners to the honour of the sons of God.

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"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 26. It gives a disposition suited to so exalted a dignity, and enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." And it gives a title to an inheritance worthy of such a relation, "for he is not ashamed to be called our God since he hath prepared for us a city." Heb. xi. 16. Without the word of the Gospel we had been poor indeed, in the knowledge of God, of ourselves, and of futurity. Without the knowledge of that Jesus as ours, held forth in his word, however we may fancy ourselves rich and increased in goods and to have need of nothing, we are spiritually poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. We possess nothing that can recommend us to the favour and love of a righteous God; nothing but what merits, through sin, his displeasure and his wrath. We are as poor as that miserable wretch, who has forfeited all his possessions, by rebellion against his lawful sovereign, and is about to suffer the just punishment of his crimes.

This, in a spiritual view, is the real situation of man. But in Jesus the attainder is taken off—the forfeited inheritance restored—yea, innumerable privileges and blessings, purchased by his blood, secured to the believing sinner. With Christ we are rich indeed, we have all things and abound. Not all the riches of both the Indies can make a man so rich as the possession of Christ as his. He who hath secured his portion here by faith, is rich in divine favour and love; rich in the present communications of spiritual blessings, enjoyed often with a sweet tranquillity of mind, when faith and hope, enlivening devotion, bring the fragrance of heavenly joys into the chambers of secret retirement; rich in the pleasing expectation that casts a beam of glory around the clouds of life; rich in the graces of the Spirit, wrought in the heart,

heart, as the meetness for fuller enjoyment in the world to come.

Possessed of these an apostle, and many with the apostle, have rejoiced in tribulation, having peace with God: yea, have joined the triumphant language of an ancient believer, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The treasures of the Gospel are not then like the treasures of earth. Go, ask all around, and try what else can bear the comparison.—It is their distinguishing excellency when all things else desert us, to support and elevate the sinking spirit. What else like these can make us rich in sorrow, rich in trials and afflictions, rich in poverty, rich in pain, rich in dying agonies, yea, rich in death. Then the Gospel of Christ opens to us.

IV. The riches of *glory*. There we are told of that rest which remaineth for the people of God, A rest from all those troubles, sorrows, temptations, and sins, which interrupted our best enjoyments, and broke unwelcome into our most spiritual devotions.—There is that crown of righteousness which fadeth not away—The eternal weight of glory—The rivers of pleasure that make glad the city of God—in his presence where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.—There no cloud shall intercept the bright shining of the sun of righteousness; we shall be perfectly like him, for we shall see him as he is.—But here our conceptions fail us.—Our dear departed fathers and brethren in the Lord know these things best. And, could they return to instruct us now again, what think ye would be the subject of their exhortation? No doubt the same which so engaged them while on earth, only with ardour abundantly increased from
views

views so much more intimate and clear. "Secure above all things, ye sons of men, an interest in Christ—that appointed, that precious, Saviour. He is the treasure of earth, the treasure of heaven. He alone can enrich you with eternal riches. Press on then towards the mark, for there is indeed a glorious prize of our high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." Thus the Gospel is a treasure.—Let us secure an interest in it, and we cannot but be rich indeed, for time, and for eternity. We are now to consider

SECONDLY, The ministers of this Gospel, who contain, and whose office it is to dispense, this treasure, under the representation of earthen vessels, or vessels of clay.—There is a peculiar beauty in the contrast which the apostle here makes of the inestimable treasure of the Gospel of Christ, with the mean and brittle vessels from which it is dispensed. Nothing can in a more striking manner evince to us the wisdom and the goodness of God, and more especially the excellency of his power, as that by which alone his truth can become effectual.—It is, no doubt, the great design of God in such a dispensation to magnify his own grace and power; and there are several ideas, which seem naturally to arise from the use of such an allusion, which will tend immediately to this point. We will endeavour to point them out, dwelling most on those which appear to us most important, most natural, or just. It has been observed

That vessels must be made by the hands of the workman, and so the ministers of the Gospel must be the workmanship of God. Though I do not conceive that this particularly entered into the mind of the apostle, in the present instance, yet the doctrine is certainly just.—As men are not born Christians,

tians, much less are they born ministers, but made so by the same distinguishing grace of God. An Isaiah must have his lips touched with a live coal from off the altar, before he can be either willing or able to declare the message of the Lord. A Paul must be a chosen vessel, and *sent* by him to bear witness to his name and truth. Let us not suppose these to be peculiar cases; though evidently so as to the circumstances that attended them, yet not as to the grace bestowed. When the apostle is, therefore, speaking of those diversities of gifts with which the church was blessed, he tells us, "all these," from the highest to the lowest, "worketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will." 1 Cor. xii. 11. And, in another place, He that ascended up on high, and gave gifts unto men, when he gave some apostles, and some prophets, gave also by the same spirit, evangelists, pastors, or teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, &c. Eph. iv. 11, 12.

It is evident, therefore, that none can make a minister of God but God himself. It is he that must incline the heart, and "inwardly move it by his holy spirit." It is he that must put within the treasure of gospel knowledge, and gospel grace. It is he that must give the necessary spiritual gifts, and grant the blessing. But, to intrude into this sacred office, under the idea of this inward preparation, without the suitable outward designation, arises from very contracted views of the ways and providence of God. He, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, can, and no doubt will, open "a door of entrance" according to the regular ordinances of his church, for all whom he commissions; direct their way; appoint their stations; secure them in their work, and grant his promised presence.—Under this consideration,

tion, indeed, we cannot but lament, when God takes away instruments he has peculiarly furnished, and blest; yet it should also satisfy us with the dispensation as it is *his*, who hath still in his own hands the residue of the Spirit. Then also

Vessels receive in order to preserve and to communicate. And should not the priest's lips preserve knowledge, and the law be sought at his mouth? No allusion, indeed, will hold good in every circumstance; thus it is here. Blessed be God, though we are to communicate to others, we ourselves are not restrained from the enjoyment. We also may partake of the precious treasures of gospel grace, and miserable shall we be, if while we dispense to others, we are destitute of its fruition in ourselves. Miserable indeed will it be, if when we have preached to others we ourselves are castaways. Yea, then shall we dispense the word with peculiar delight and advantage, when we can say, "what our eyes have seen, what our hands have handled," what our hearts have felt, declare we unto you: it is our desire "that your fellowship may be with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ." Then will our talents, our time, our graces, be employed as they ought for the edification of the church, we shall study to approve ourselves to God, &c. and, "by manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." But this allusion may justly signify to us

Our total insufficiency to communicate these blessings as of ourselves. We are but empty vessels, the treasure is altogether distinct from the vessel, and must be derived from another source.—It can neither fill itself, nor communicate of its contents when filled. No more can the minister of the Gospel ei-

ther know the truth aright, preach it in its simplicity, or convey the power and blessings of it, but as enabled by the Spirit of the Lord. If an apostle "laboured more abundantly than they all, it was not he but the grace of God which was with him." If "he preached Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man, with all wisdom, &c. it was according to his working, which wrought in him mightily." Col. i. 27, 28.—It would be well for you, my Christian brethren, always to recollect this truth, you would then pray more earnestly for your ministers, bear with our infirmities, and look up to the right source for the blessings you wish to receive. When you found yourselves heavy and unfit for duties, or your ministers affected with the same weakness of human nature, your supplications would be directed for reviving influence to the God of all grace; and, when enjoying those happy frames, which sometimes animate our duties, and elevate our hearts, the glory would be given to him. For ministers are not only vessels but earthen vessels—implying

That they are in themselves, poor and mean, and unsuitable to contain or display such infinite glories.—So indeed are the best of men, endowed with the best gifts of nature or of grace: though called from amongst the wise, the mighty, or the noble, of this world. "But God hath often chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. i. 28.

It is the great design of God to humble the pride of man. His instruments therefore have often been what
man

man would not have chosen : destitute of those polite accomplishments, that learning and eloquence, which the world so much admire. And truly, if they possess these, they must learn to despise them, in comparison of the simplicity of the faith ; to determine not to know any thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified ; while their speech and their preaching is not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that the faith of believers may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 2—5.

Often indeed in the sensible experience of the same infirmities, sorrows, weaknesses, and fears, with others, they carry within themselves an affecting proof of their inability for so great a work, and are ready to exclaim, " Who is sufficient for these things ?" Often they are tired in the work, though not of it, and, while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.—Often when they see the infinite glories, and vast importance of the truth, in connection with their own insufficiency of body and of mind, they are ready to wish, with the prophet, " not to make mention of him, nor to speak any more in his name : till his word is in their hearts as a burning fire shut up in their bones, and they are weary of forbearing, and cannot stay." Jer. xx. 9. But this allusion implies still further—

That they are sinners by nature and by practice, to whom this treasure is committed, this dispensation of the Gospel grace.—God hath chosen, and it is an instance of his great compassion, to speak to us by men in all respects like ourselves, men of like passions, and sinful infirmities. Even a bold Elijah trembles and flies before the face of a woman, when left to prove his strength. Weak and frail,

they often discover the blemishes of human nature, and have reason, like their fellow-sinners, for humiliation and continual watchfulness. Thus they can feel for, and address themselves to, the circumstances of such imperfect creatures; while themselves are compelled to lament over their indwelling corruptions, and take up the cry of an apostle, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

Wonderful is it that such unlikely instruments should be the means of conveying such blessings of grace and salvation to miserable sinners. And it is a proof of the sovereign grace of God, that such frail creatures, while they feel frequent causes of inward grief, should be upheld, by the great head of his church, as stars in his hand, and should not be left to dishonour the gospel they proclaim. It is true, we have sometimes lamentable instances of this kind, which speak with a loud and warning voice, directing us to the only preserver of his saints, and admonishing us, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And woe be to those who can magnify the blemishes of such, or use them, with a secret gratification, to increase their prejudices against the gospel of Christ, which yet remains the same.—But what the apostle had here particularly in view was no doubt,

That this everlasting gospel is committed in its dispensation to sinful *mortals*; dying and passing away; all under the same sentence, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" No excellency of character or of office can change the vessel of clay, can exempt the person who sustains them from the stroke of death. Even in the discharge of our office we are frequently reminded, "that soon the earthly house of this tabernacle

nacle shall be dissolved." And quickly its Creator dashes it into pieces, and it moulders back to dust. Strange that such changing instruments should be chosen to carry on such an unchanging design, and administer such unchanging blessings. They sometimes appear to us of great importance in the church, but not so to him. They have only to do their allotted work, then the vessel is broken, and appears no more. Of this the present providence affords us an affecting proof.

And here I cannot decline to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of a faithful servant of the Lord, and adore what God had made him.

Early called by grace to the knowledge of the truth, he had attained peculiarly clear and evangelical views of its nature and its glories. Though, from his family and connections in life, he had reason to expect an elevated situation in the church, and honour in the world, no sooner was his mind enlightened by the gospel, and his heart influenced by its power, than he sacrificed all to win Christ—to preach Christ—to bring his fellow sinners to the knowledge of Christ crucified. His faith was not a mere notion or profession, but "gold tried in the fire, that shall be found unto praise and honour and glory." Like Moses, "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt:" or, like the apostle, "he accounted all things but as dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

His natural talents were strong and penetrating. His memory was remarkably tenacious, as by twice reading he could make a subject his own. His knowledge of the scriptures was very accurate and extensive, particularly of the Old Testament, the design and evangelical import of which seemed familiar to his mind.

Yea his general views of the gospel were enriched with a peculiar spiritual energy, much like those of our late venerable minister, to whose memory he paid the last tribute of respect. His preaching was plain and simple, but powerful and convincing, attended, at the same time, with such a serious and commanding address, as could not but obtain the attention of the most careless. Every one felt that what was spoken was believed—was uttered under a deep conviction of its truth, and every one (at least for the time) felt its importance enforced upon his own heart.

A firm friend to the church of England, with the utmost candour and liberality towards those who differed from him, it was his sincere desire to promote its interests and its welfare. And happy would he have been to have seen all the friends of its evangelical doctrines uniting to maintain its discipline, and the acknowledged friends of its discipline uniting to maintain the purity of its articles of faith. His views of these were, it is confessed, what are generally called Calvinistic. And indeed it appears strange to those who embrace the same sentiments with him (whatever may be the prevailing opinions of the present day, or the possible construction of some parts of their language) that any one should seriously deny it to have been their original design to support this system of doctrine, who compares their most literal and evident meaning with the well known writings and sentiments of those venerable characters who compiled them. But, whatever may be thought of these principles, in his case, at least, they must be acknowledged to have been productive of the abundant fruits of righteousness, and charities, which may long render his name dear to the poor who so liberally experienced them.

He

He who is infinitely wise, and does nothing without design, had not called such an instrument out from the world, and so fitted him for the work, but for essential service. He made him, therefore, very useful in his situation, gave him many seals to his ministry, who shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the great day of the Lord. To them he no doubt was, as he ought to be, peculiarly dear, while the amiable condescension of his manners (always forgetting the dignity of his birth) made him beloved by all.—God kept him faithful and consistent to the end. And, after holding forth the word of life, on his Thursday evening lecture, he was suddenly seized with a disorder that quickly terminated his work on earth.

But, though his affliction was sudden, it met him not unprepared. "When his apothecary entered he said, I am dying, but I bless God all my affairs are settled for both worlds. I am dying, but I am going to live for ever.—I die in the faith of the gospel, and in love and charity with all men, especially with all my Christian brethren," and then in prayer sweetly committed his partner and his friends into the hands of the Lord."——"He died as he lived, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; glorified God in the fires; and, though with much weakness and extreme pain of body, his mind was perfectly composed, and his judgment unimpaired to the last. He took his leave of his distressed partner and his household, and exhorted them to resignation and confidence in God. "I am going (said he), I am dying, but I am quite happy, I die in the faith of the Lord Jesus.—And the last words he was heard to articulate were, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty."——Thus, dying in the full triumph of

faith, confident of his interest in the salvation of the Lord, and looking forward with holy joy to the glory that is beyond, he sweetly realized those animating words, chosen by him as the last tribute of respect to the memory of our late venerable pastor—"This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide unto death."—Oh that we all might be followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises—By such a death we cannot but feel more sensibly the importance of such a life. But his work was done, and the vessel is broken, that God may have all the glory.—This leads us to inquire,

THIRDLY, The design of God in raising up, employing, and, we may add also, in casting aside, such instruments as these—"That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."—There is then an excellency of power in the gospel, though administered by such feeble means. And this, above all besides, evinces it to be the gospel of God, that he acknowledges it as his, and attends it with his blessing. The earthen vessel, that brought some of you acquainted with its glories, has been removed, but the effects remain. You yet experience these effects of gospel grace, the most excellent that can ever be produced on sinners, and you are well convinced that nothing but an almighty power could ever have wrought them.

You were in darkness and ignorance through sin, and you became *enlightened* by the truth. You have been brought to see the great evil of sin, the dreadful state and condition you were in by nature, while all your once boasted excellency vanished, and you stood in your own sight sinners guilty and condemned. Whenever the Gospel is truly preached,

this influence is yet experienced; yet not from the ministration itself, but from the power of God.

Yea, you have been *converted* by the efficacy of grace, not only brought out of darkness into light, but from the power of sin and Satan unto God. While you have found and lamented the guilt and power of sin, you have felt a deliverance from both, in your conscience and in your heart. A change has been wrought. You have been born again of the Spirit by the word of truth. Your hearts have been effectually turned, and you have loved those ways of God which formerly you hated, and hated those ways of sin that just before you had delight in. You cannot but feel and acknowledge the change. It was wrought through the ministry of men, but not of themselves, the excellency of the power was of God and not of us. To him therefore you ascribe the glory, and say, "by the grace of God I am what I am."

Under a deep sense of your sin and danger you have been *brought to Christ*. Convinced of your need of his atoning sacrifice, and justifying righteousness, you have fled by faith to this hope set before you. You have seen his glories so as to believe and trust in him, and are now living the life which you live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God. Your pride has been humbled, and now you renounce all besides, to know and be found in him. What a change is here from the self exalting views of nature! The very work itself teaches you its author, and where to ascribe the glory, to the excellency of that power which is of God.

Yea, you are *sanctified* by this truth. You cannot live in sin as heretofore, but have learned that important lesson how to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, by faith in Christ.

And by the same Gospel of truth you are continually

nually *preserved* and *edified*. You sometimes come weak, and are strengthened; you come dark, and are enlightened; doubting, and are satisfied; fearful, and are encouraged; tempted, and are succoured; backsliding in heart, and are restored. "You wait upon the Lord, and renew your strength; mount on the wings of faith as on eagles wings, run and are not weary, continue to go forward, and faint not." The gospel comes in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. When you look upon the instrument you are well convinced that what you experience was beyond his power to perform, and you acknowledge the hand of God. And if, when beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, you are changed into the same image, it is evidently by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus he reserves the honour to himself.

God might have spoken to us by the most illustrious instruments; he might have commanded his obedient angels to proclaim his grace to sinners; it had been a message worthy of their dignified and exalted natures, and an additional honour to those favoured spirits.—But then we might have trusted in the messenger, and forgot the work of God. Now he is continually reminding us where to look, and where to depend. Our gourds are continually withering, that we may seek shelter at last only beneath the protection of his own gracious care. And, while we enjoy, and use, and bless him for, the means, he daily calls us to remember, "the excellency of the power is of God and not of us."

Two or three remarks, tending to apply this important subject, shall close our present address to you.

First. Our text teaches us a lesson of trust and confidence in God, under the darkest dispensation towards his church.

His church is in his own hands; instruments are all

all of his own raising; it is from him they are furnished, from him they receive the blessing. When vessels are broken, the treasure is yet preserved the same, in the hand of him who made them all, and who has yet the same heart of compassion, the same arm of power, and the same fullness of the Spirit. Yet, when we recollect, "the righteous is sometimes taken away from the evil to come," let us not be of those who lay it not to heart. While we recollect, they are sometimes removed in righteous judgment, because the gift has not been improved, we ought to attend to such providences with solemn consideration, and be careful to derive some benefit from them, when they come within the sphere of our own observation or connexions. Confident however that the great Head of his church has yet the faithful care of it, we must submit to his most intricate visitations, and rely upon his wisdom and his grace.

The words of our text in connexion with such a providence as the present,

Secondly, Speak loudly in admonition to remaining ministers of the Gospel. May I hear and improve the warning voice! Is it my office to dispense the inestimable treasure of the Gospel of Christ? May I never mix impurity or error with his unchanging truth. May I not be as those which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak always in Christ.—Am I only a vessel of clay? May I always remember where the treasure is to be obtained, and who alone can enable me to dispense and communicate to your hearts.—Pray therefore for me, my brethren, for your own sakes, and for my sake, that I may be kept thus humble and dependent, and that this grace may

may be given me, for the edification of the church. And surely such considerations as these should urge us all to a faithful discharge of the duties of our important trust. How soon may these vessels be broken! How soon may we be unable to bear any more testimony for our Lord and Master, to call sinners to partake his salvation, or encourage believers in the good ways of the Lord! How uncertain is the tenure of life! Your late venerable pastor, who seriously warned and sweetly encouraged, is now no more. He, who from this place, payed the last tribute of respect to his memory, has unexpectedly followed him through the gates of death; though, if strength of constitution, or importance of situation, had formed any security, he had yet survived. And God, in whose hands are the spirits of all flesh, only knows how long I may be permitted to plead his cause among you.—Bear with us then, my brethren, in our faithfulness. Bear with us when we watch for your souls, as they which must give account, when we warn you of the danger of sin—when by the terrors of the Lord we persuade men—when we urge you by the value of your immortal souls—when we exhort and persuade you, by the tender mercies and rich grace of the Gospel, to accept a free salvation, and give yourselves to the Lord. Oh that God would enable us to be more faithful, and more earnest, and grant from the excellency of his power abundant success.—Let us unite together, for this purpose, in the energetic language of the prophet, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.” Or in the similar language of our church, “O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before

fore them. O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour."

The words of our text, in connection with such a providence as the present,

Thirdly, Speak loudly in admonition to the hearers of the Gospel.—The Gospel is God's ordinance, attended with his excellent power to the enlightening, the sanctifying, and saving, sinners of mankind. Surely then we should carefully examine what effect it hath produced upon us.

You have long heard this Gospel of salvation, and yet, perhaps, you are still under the influence of your sins, and led captive by the powers of darkness. The God of this world hath blinded your eyes that its glories are not perceived. Though you have "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," you are yet insensible either of the evil of sin, or the excellency of spiritual blessings: you are yet walking in the ways of sin, bold in your iniquities, or carelessly indifferent. How awful will be your situation when you meet your ministers, who have spoken to you in the name of the Lord, before his throne of judgment. "We warned those sinners, shall they say, we have spoken to them again and again, they have neither been destitute of admonition, reproof, encouragements, or exhortations. We are clear from the blood of them, and, if they perish, it is because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."—"Awake then, thou sleeper, and call upon thy God, if so be thou perish not." Yet the abundant treasures of mercy and grace are open to thee, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But remember, the word of the Gospel cannot be heard in vain.

vain. There are but two effects which it can answer, one of which it must answer upon thee. It must either be "the Saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death in all who hear it." 2 Cor. ii. 16.

Beware, my fellow sinners, that you do not take offence at the Gospel, because you perceive the imperfection of human nature in those who declare its truths.—God hath chosen such earthen vessels, by which to convey the blessings of his Gospel, that the glory may be his. Intreat then the teaching and divine influence of his spirit; for, whatever the vessels may be, if you partake not of the treasure they contain, you must be poor indeed—poor for eternity.

Perhaps you may have heard the Gospel long, so as to distinguish its truths, and discover something of its glories: but has it reached your hearts in the love and power of it? Without this it will avail you nothing. To have a form of godliness without the power, is of all things the most dangerous, as it is generally most deceitful. Remember, my dear friends, how soon your minister may die, how soon you may die; and then all your means of grace are over. If they have not yet answered their design, well consider the state you are in, and how you shall appear, when neglected means shall only aggravate your guilt, and increase your condemnation.

Happy are you, my hearers, to whom the Gospel has come in the excellency of its power, to enlighten, to quicken, to sanctify, and to save. You will rightly esteem your ministers as stewards of the mysteries of Christ; and, while using them as God's appointed instruments to promote his glory, but looking beyond them for the blessing, you will by their means be more and more enriched with grace, edified in faith and love, comforted in your journey

through life, and safely carried forward to the end. They indeed shall pass away—those vessels of clay shall be broken,—but “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” His love is unchanging, his power almighty, his righteousness and salvation everlasting. “The moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation. Yea lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.” Is. li. 8, 6.

Happy they who are interested in these unchanging treasures—Oh, thou eternal Jehovah, one God in three persons, the God of grace and mercy, grant us the enjoyment, and, with the excellency of the power, the excellency of the glory shall be thine. Amen and Amen.

THE END.

(11)
THIS plain Sermon, first preached as a tribute of respect to the memory of a most valuable character in the church, is now published with the same view.—It as nearly corresponds with what was delivered, as recollection would enable, or circumstances admit.—Some few alterations are made in the account of the deceased, from attaining further information.—Such as it is, it is submitted to the perusal of those who read rather for spiritual profit than for criticism:—and especially to those amongst whom the providence of God hath appointed me to labour: attended with earnest prayer for his blessing upon it, to their edification in the faith, hope, and obedience, of the Gospel.

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